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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

ATTITUDES OF HO CHI MINH AND LE DUAN
TOWARD THE WAR IN VIETNAM

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Attitudes of Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan Toward
the War in Vietnam

SUMMARY

Over the past several months the activities of North Vietnam's top two party leaders, Chairman Ho Chi Minh and First Secretary Le Duan, have tended to confirm Hanoi's determination to continue the war in Vietnam. Since the end of the US bombing lull in late January both men have been working vigorously, although in differing fashions, in pursuit of the basic policy objective, victory in South Vietnam. The sharpening of the Sino-Soviet dispute during this period has made the delicate problem of ensuring continued assistance from both Peking and Moscow particularly difficult, for both Communist giants are using the issue of support for Vietnam to attack one another and wrest political concessions from the Vietnamese.

1. Ho Chi Minh appears to have concentrated his efforts on preparing his people for a long war and on garnering international free world support for the Communist position in Vietnam. Continuing a trend begun early last year, Ho has frequently made himself available to carefully selected foreign correspondents to explain North Vietnamese objectives. At home he has continued to exhort his own people to participate more fully in war related regime programs. Ho's major effort to counter the adverse image created by Hanoi's refusal to respond positively to the US "peace offensive" in January came in the form of a personal letter to heads of state in which he restated Vietnamese determination to continue fighting until the US agreed to the DRV

SECRET

four-point peace proposal and gave the reasons for this attitude.

2. Le Duan, operating with less publicity and more on a working level, has pursued the same objectives. In the past several months, he has exchanged views with high-level delegations from a number of Communist parties, explaining the Vietnamese case to the Hungarians in October, the Canadians in December, the Soviets in January, and the Japanese in February. He has undoubtedly been seeking an increase in both political and military assistance. Some of these Communist delegations, however, while pledging support for Hanoi in the war, have cautioned the North Vietnamese against miscalculating US intentions and capabilities. In his most dramatic move to implement Hanoi's traditional policy of seeking support from both Moscow and Peking, Le Duan led the North Vietnamese party delegation to the Soviet party's 23rd Congress. He stopped to talk with the Chinese for four days enroute to Moscow, and in Moscow he apparently remained for substantive consultations with Soviet leaders after the close of the Congress.

3. In addition to working on their foreign relations problems, both Ho and Le Duan are believed to have spent many hours over the last few months coping with the problems resulting from the increased pace of the war. A round of important Central Committee meetings took place in North Vietnam in late 1965 at which national directives (drafted earlier by the Politburo) were disseminated. These directives were designed to implement the decision to meet new US commitments to the war in the South and to offset bomb damage in the North.

4. The current rate of infiltration of men into the South--more than 3400 since the first of the year--indicates that one of these decisions was to continue the stepped-up dispatch of regular PAVN units into South Vietnam to counter increased US involvement. The 1965 infiltration of 20,000 men represents almost a 50 percent increase over the rate of any other year, and current evidence indicates that it may be increased even further in 1966. Decisions were also taken at this time to mobilize the economy of North Vietnam to support of the new pace of fighting in the South, and to organize a more effective defense effort for the North.

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5. Viewed from Hanoi, the current political unrest in South Vietnam must look encouraging. Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan undoubtedly feel that the policy Hanoi has been pursuing in the South is now paying some dividends. Although they know from past experiences with political turmoil in South Vietnam that there is no guarantee the Communists will be able to use the current disorders to achieve political control, they probably interpret the anti-Americanism displayed in some of the demonstrations as moving them one step closer to the day when US troops will be forced to withdraw.

6. North Vietnamese propaganda on the demonstrations in the South, has hammered away at the theme that if the struggle were expanded to include the US as well as the Ky government, all South Vietnamese could then join together to force the US out and settle their problems by themselves. It is no accident that Hanoi has chosen the third of Pham Van Dong's "four points" for special emphasis during the past week. The third point called for the situation in South Vietnam to be settled in accordance with the program of the Liberation Front and without foreign interference.

7. Judging from their past actions, the North Vietnamese leaders will probably seek to exploit the fragile political situation in the South as far as possible, trying for the most part to turn popular agitation against the US. Militarily, they will probably continue to dispatch large numbers of infiltrators into South Vietnam on the stepped up scale which has prevailed over the past several months. They will hope to be able to make sizable inroads into government controlled areas as a result of the unrest.

8. An indications that the attitude of the North Vietnamese toward the war has not changed over the past year was clearly signaled in the party's major journals last week on the occasion of the first anniversary of the enunciation of Pham Van Dong's four points. Hanoi seemed to be saying, effect, that despite one year of US air attacks on North Vietnam and one year of US combat activity on the ground in South Vietnam, the Communists' conditions for ending the conflict have not changed at all.

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Next 7 Page(s) In Document Exempt